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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001568

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DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP, INL, DRL, NEA/RA, AND NEA/ARP, L/DL

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TAGS: PREL PHUM KCRM ELAB UN AE

SUBJECT: UNICEF FOCUSED ON "PHASE TWO" OF CAMEL JOCKEY  
REPATRIATION

REFS: ABU DHABI 1539

Classified by CDA Martin Quinn, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: UNICEF's new Chief of Child Protection in Abu Dhabi has ambitious goals regarding the implementation of "phase two" of the camel jockey repatriation program, which he hopes will involve mapping of the camel farms and better tracking of victims. He commended the UAEG for the successful implementation of the initial phase. He hopes to shift the focus from individual cases to the systemic dynamics of trafficking in an effort to broaden the UAE effort, prevent re-trafficking of those already victimized once, and broaden TIP awareness regionally. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Mr. Ghassan Khalil, newly arrived "Chief of Child Protection" at the UNICEF Gulf Area Office discussed the camel jockey issue with PolChief September 17. Khalil brings to the newly-created position in Abu Dhabi a long history of work in UNICEF (most recently in Bangladesh) and substantive credentials related to child trafficking and protection (a Lebanese lawyer by training, he gave PolChief a copy of his book "Child Rights: The Historical Evolution"). UNICEF had previously coordinated the camel jockey program largely through its representative in Oman; with Khalil now on board in Abu Dhabi, he sees "child protection," and the camel jockey issue in particular, as a primary function for his one-man office in coming months. He looks to expand staff as the need arises.

¶3. (C) Reviewing the camel jockey question, Khalil said the UAE had done a good job of implementing "phase one" of the repatriation program, with most of the 1,077 repatriated boys now successfully reunited with their families. Bangladesh (where he has recent experience) was a model of implementation, he said, with 198 out of 199 boys having returned to their homes. He commended the UAE for hosting meetings of the four source countries (a "planning" session in 2005, a "review" in 2006, and an "evaluation" in 2007 for the primary source countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sudan, and Mauritania). Repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration were going well as a result. Nonetheless, he said the UAE was mistaken if it was looking for a quick solution to an entrenched problem. "Phase two" is only beginning, and should involve a database to follow up on those repatriated and a monitoring system to "map the farms and racing tracks" to identify children still in the camel industry.

¶4. (SBU) One goal of a broader monitoring program is to ensure that no boys are re-trafficked, a real possibility after they return home to the same harsh economic reality that preceded their initial move to the UAE. Another goal is to link data from the UAE and source countries to ensure no

one slips through the cracks and that commitments to repatriated children are kept. A data base could also be used to monitor migration to other GCC countries, in which the magnitude of the camel jockey problem is yet unknown.

¶5. (SBU) In the case of Bangladesh, repatriated boys were given "bonds" of \$1,500 each, which would mature when they turned 18 years of age. Monthly installments of about \$50 were paid out in the interim. Khalil stated that the near perfect reintegration rate for Bangladeshi boys was quite phenomenal, given overall "rejection and re-trafficking" rates as high as 80% in some TIP situations. He said some of the boys had been sending remittances to their families of over \$100 monthly when they were active jockeys, so it was important for the UAE to ensure payment of salary owed and ongoing payouts from the bonds it funds. The UAE's strong commitment gave momentum to the first phase.

¶6. (C) Now it is time for the camel jockey program to focus more on the community, and mechanisms to prevent recurrent trafficking, rather than solely on the individual cases of repatriated jockeys, according to Khalil. The boys need ongoing protection in the context of a broader resolution of systemic issues that can again be exploited to the detriment of the children. Analyzing how the boys were initially trafficked must be part of the next phase, to "understand the roots" of the problem and combat the "tricks of the traffickers." Khalil believes that addressing TIP more broadly is a "golden opportunity" for the UAE to make progress against trafficking of other segments of the population as well (such as sex workers). UNICEF is in consultation with the UAEG (including the Executive Office of Vice President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai Mohammed bin Rashid and the Ministry of Interior in Abu Dhabi) on

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proposals from the source countries regarding the parameters of phase two of the camel jockey program.

¶7. (C) Khalil was hopeful of ongoing UAEG cooperation and even seeking the assistance of UAE nationals in mapping out the camel farms and tracks. If he can beef up his staffing and succeed in phase two implementation, Khalil said he could share data (and lessons learned) with other regional players and begin to tackle broader TIP issues in the Gulf.

¶8. (C) Comment: Khalil appears to be the right person to build upon the momentum of the repatriation program and help the UAEG expand its anti-TIP efforts (related to children in particular). The strength of cooperation from the UAEG will in large measure determine his success. Post will continue to press the UAEG and encourage UNICEF to build further momentum in the direction of enduring solutions to trafficking. End comment.

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